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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, JUNE 9, 2008

In Today's Papers

Toptan Suggests 'Two-Chamber Parliament' System

All papers reported over the weekend and today that Parliament Speaker Koksal Toptan told a Saturday morning press conference that the Constitutional Court's decision to scrap the AKP-MHP sponsored headscarf reforms means Turkey needs to reform its political system.

Toptan stressed the parliament holds the legislative power, and suggested the parliament consider drafting a new constitution and establishing a bi-chamber parliamentary system. He said he plans to bring together the leaders of political parties represented in parliament to discuss these matters. Toptan's proposal came as a "surprise" for the AKP, according to papers. Papers report the AKP deputy chairman Dengir Mir Mehmet Firat said Turkey already tried this system before 1980 but abandoned it. AKP deputy group Chief Nihat Ergun said the bi-house system could slow down the legislative process in Turkey. Opposition MHP Secretary General Cihan Pacaci rejected Toptan's proposal, saying Turkey needs to reform its election system instead. Opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal said Turkey was experiencing "unsuitable conditions" for new constitutional reforms and warned that reform attempts could lead to deep divisions within the Turkish public. CHP deputy group Chief Hakki Suha Okay said it was not for the Parliament Speaker to criticize the Constitutional Court decision; Okay criticized Toptan for not being "impartial." Toptan stressed his proposal was not influenced by anybody. Papers, however, note on Sunday that Toptan's press conference came after a meeting with Prime Minister Erdogan.

Mainstream Milliyet commented over the weekend the AKP wants reforms to restrict the powers of the Constitutional Court. In, "The AKP Is Negative to the Proposal for a Two-Chamber Parliament," mainstream Milliyet reports the reforms, nevertheless, will be part of a broader democratization package. Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Cicek and other leading AKP officials object to the reforms idea, saying the party should wait for the outcome of the lawsuit for closing down the ruling party, according to Milliyet and nationalist-oriented Cumhuriyet. Mainstream Hurriyet claims although it was the AKP officials who pressed Toptan to intervene to reduce the tense environment, they did not agree with Toptan's

formula re-instituting the senate. A legal expert told the Islamist-oriented Zaman on Monday that a bi-chamber structure will not solve the problem and will only stall the legislative process and increase tensions. Under the headline, "Real Democracy -- Right Now!" on its front page Monday, liberal Radikal says Turkey needs to introduce democracy without delay.

On Monday, Erdogan will hold his weekly meeting with his party board to address his party group in the parliament Tuesday. Mainstream Vatan expects Erdogan's speech at the party group meeting tomorrow to be a "democratic manifesto" in which the PM is expected to call on the political parties to work together to defend their "right to live," and underscore that the annulment of the headscarf reforms does not target merely the AKP.

Editorial Commentary on the Constitutional Court Decision

"About The System"

Okay Gonensin wrote in mainstream Vatan (6/9): "The tradition continues: Ankara's politicians always start debates about checks and balances when they make a big mistake, and this time the same thing is happening. The fact of the matter is that Turkey has a systematic problem which stems from a constitution that was shaped by the military in 1982. Even though this constitution has been amended, time has proven that Turkey can no longer live with it. Interestingly enough, it was not until the AKP that a political authority showed a strong will to work toward a brand new constitution. Although the ruling AKP had the courage and the wherewithal, the effort failed in the end due to a lack of vision and a lack of political experience. Meanwhile, the opposition CHP

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is also a part of the problem because they also have no clear vision. The AKP should start working towards a contemporary constitution that treats freedoms as a whole instead of focusing on only those freedoms related to the AKP's political roots. A brand new and genuinely liberal constitution is what we need, along with a brand new law regarding political parties."

"The Aftermath of the Decision"

Yilmaz Oztuna wrote in conservative Turkiye (6/9): "The Constitutional Court decision has almost divided the country's opinion into two - half of Turkey is pleased with it, while the other half is not. The court decision is certainly subject to criticism but it must be applied as is. The court decision, in light of the pending closure case, can also be interpreted as a decision against the ruling AKP. It is also a warning to the parliament about the protection of the Turkish Republic. The parliament chose to change the turban ban through a constitutional amendment and is now facing the consequences. The current situation is complex because Turkey is in need of a completely new constitution. By focusing on a certain issue, i.e. headscarf, the perception that the government has a specific agenda was enhanced. After all, the court's decision was political, and we will see the rationale when the detailed justification is issued."

UN Iraq Envoy Unveils Kirkuk Report

Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet and far right Ortadoğu report the UN Special Envoy to Iraq Staffan de Mistura submitted his preliminary report on the disputed areas and borders in Iraq to the Iraqi President and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). The regional Kurdish Parliament has convened an extraordinary session to discuss the report, which suggests the annexation of Kirkuk to four regions.

The report is far from meeting the expectations of the Kurds, who want all of Kirkuk to be tied to the Kurdish Administration, says Cumhuriyet.

James Jeffrey To Be Nominated Ambassador To Turkey

Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Taraf, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others gave positive, straightforward and widespread coverage of President Bush's announcement to nominate James Jeffrey as the next U.S. Ambassador to Turkey. Papers say in order to be able to begin his mission in Turkey, Jeffrey's nomination needs to be approved by the U.S. Senate. Jeffrey, who served three other assignments in Turkey, is currently the White House Deputy National Security Advisor. He previously served as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the

State Department Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs. Earlier, he was the Deputy Chief of Mission in Baghdad and the U.S. Ambassador to Albania.

PKK Target in Zap Struck in Nighttime Air Raid

Bugun, Zaman, Yeni Safak, Star: The Turkish General Staff web site stated that "Turkish F-16s hit a PKK/KONGRAGEL target in the Zap region of northern Iraq on June 7 at 22.30." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that F-16 planes took off from Diyarbakir air base and hit targeted radio stations and several PKK camps.

TV News:

CNN Turk

Domestic News

- One more worker has died in an accident at the Tuzla shipyards in Istanbul. Shipyard workers are still planning to strike against unsafe working conditions at the shipyard on June 16. During the past nine months, 26 workers have been killed in Tuzla shipyards.

- Prime Minister Erdogan will join the Turkish-Arab Economic Forum in Istanbul on June 12-13. The Prime Ministers of Palestine, Qatar and Syria will also join the forum.

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- A report by Ankara Chamber of Trade (ATO) says over the last four years, the debts of the average Turkish family have increased seven-fold while their income increased only two-fold.

International News

- Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki promised the U.S.-Iraqi security pact would not negatively affect Iran.

- Two people were killed and over 100 injured when a 6.5-magnitude quake hit southern Greece. The Turkish Red Crescent sent humanitarian aid to the region.

WILSON